

17 Bible Foods That Heal

by Marla Xeno

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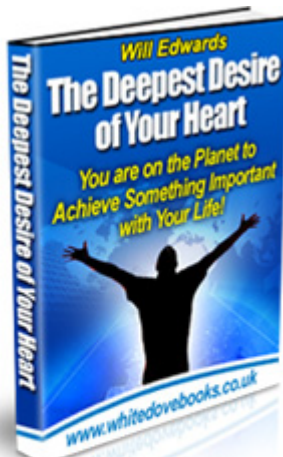
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Apples – Song of Solomon

No biblical food is more famous and none has gotten a worse rap than the apple – despite the fact that Adam and Eve probably didn't even see an apple, much less munch on one.

The Bible never says exactly what fruit the serpent used to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden. Tradition holds that it was an apple, but many scholars who have studied the botany of the Bible think it was more likely an apricot – maybe even a citron, an orange or a quince, a central Asian fruit that resembles a hard-fleshed yellow apple.

But else where in the Bible, the apple gets high marks for its healthful, healing powers that modern science has since confirmed.

The Ancient Greeks who lived during Bible times believed the apple healed all ailments. An Arabic author from the same era wrote: “Its scent cheers my soul, renews my strength and restores my breath.”

An article in *American Medicine* magazine has praised the apple as “... therapeutically effective in all conditions of acidosis, gout, rheumatism, jaundice, all liver and gallbladder troubles, nervous and skin diseases caused by sluggish liver, hyperacidity and states of autointoxication.”

Modern researchers at Michigan State University call the apple “... the all-round health food.” Here are some of the potent healing powers of apples:

- They lower both bad cholesterol and high blood pressure
- The juices in apples are highly effective virus fighters
- They help stabilize blood sugar, an important factor in controlling diabetes.
- They suppress the appetite without robbing the body of necessary nutrients, so they're great for dieters.
- Depending on the need, they prevent constipation or help treat diarrhea.

Nutritionists suggest that eating two or three apples a day can boost the body's protection against heart disease thanks to the fruit's amazing ability to reduce blood pressure and lower dangerously high cholesterol levels. In fact, they say, the higher the cholesterol, the greater the benefits will be if you increase your consumption of apples. Apples also contain chemicals that scientists believed are vital in stopping cancer, and they also prevent tooth decay.

The apple's ability to keep our hearts healthy and pumping has been confirmed by U.S., French and Italian researchers, among others. An animal study at the Institute of Physiology in France came to the startling conclusion that a diet heavy in apples actually lowered heart-damaging cholesterol levels anywhere from 28 to 52 points.

One reason for this may be the pectin in the apple – that soluble fiber that is usually squeezed out to make jelly. The French researchers discovered that the pectin, acting with vitamin C and other natural chemicals in the apple, also forms a fortress-like shield around the heart that prevents cardiovascular disease.

In another study, when a group of 30 middle-aged men added three apples per day to their diets – without changing anything else -80% of them showed a significant reduction in cholesterol levels from 10 – 20 percent.

Even more surprising was the fact that the apple boosted the HDL, or “good” cholesterol in the blood, while reducing the LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, that’s responsible for clogging up the arteries, a condition that can lead to fatal heart attacks or disabling strokes. However, for some mysterious reason, an apple-rich diet lowers cholesterol more efficiently in women than men.

Apples are an excellent food source for diabetics and others who need to control blood sugar levels. They rank high among foods that best control blood sugar. Even though the apple is a rich source of natural sugar, it does not cause a rapid or dangerous rise in blood sugar. Also, it prevents the body from pumping out too much insulin which, in turn, helps bring down blood cholesterol and blood pressure.

Some people just have to smell an apple to get the benefit. Scientists at the prestigious Yale University’s Psychophysiology Center discovered that the scent of spiced apples produces a calming effect which helps to lower blood pressure. Researchers have noted that apple eaters also suffered far fewer stress-related illnesses.

Whole apples (as opposed to just the juice) are great for dieters. The rise in blood glucose levels that occurs when you eat an apple makes you feel fuller.

In addition, the apple juice helps keep you healthy and it helps during the healing process – especially if you are suffering from colds or viruses. People who eat apples regularly have far fewer colds and upper respiratory problems. In a Michigan State study of 1,300 students, those who regularly ate apples over a three-year period made one-third fewer visits to the campus health center than non-apple eaters.

There are also indications that apples may fight certain types of cancer. The reason appears to be that apples are loaded with natural acids that have successfully blocked cancer formation in laboratory studies.

Remember that to get the best health benefit, you have to eat the whole thing, skin and all. The skin contains the high level of pectin fiber, which seems to be the basis for the fruit’s amazing powers.

The apple may also be the only healing food capable of taking care of two opposite complaints at the same time – constipation and diarrhea. First, apples or applesauce have been used for centuries to help people get back on a regular diet after suffering bouts of diarrhea. The pectin in the apple fiber apparently is the

healing factor, which explains why it is included in Kaopectate, an over-the-counter diarrhea remedy.

Also, that same fiber is what dietitians have been telling us for decades is absolutely necessary to keep us regular and to prevent constipation.

Finally, apples are not only a superb healing food, but, as nature's original toothbrushes, they may even prevent cavities. The people of Bible times probably learned that through trial and error, but modern day researchers have confirmed that fact in the laboratory. Scientists in Norway found that children who ate apples had cleaner teeth than those who did not, and they also had significantly less risk of tooth decay.

The Bible's wise King Solomon knew what he was talking about when he said, "Comfort me with apples, for I am sick..."

Barley – Deuteronomy 8:8

The Bible is filled with reference to barley, which is among the earliest known and most nourishing grains ever to be cultivated. In fact, some scholars say The Feast of Unleavened Bread was an ancient barley harvest festival that became the celebration of the Passover.

Bible history experts say that barley was not as valuable as wheat. But it was the staple food of the masses and as such was a prominent feature of the early Israelites. Nevertheless, the fact that barley is mentioned so often shows that the people of the period consumed great quantities of this grain, which played a vital role in their health and healing – whether they knew it or not.

For thousands of years, barley has enjoyed a fine reputation as a food that improves potency, vigor and strength. Roman gladiators were sometimes called *hordearii*, meaning “barley eaters,” because the grain was added to their diet to give them bursts of strength before their contests. Today, we know from studies that barley is one of three balanced starches – along with rice and potatoes – that are rich in complex carbohydrates that fuel the body with a steady stream of energy.

Even today, barley is still an important food throughout the Middle East – which may account for the generally low rate of heart disease in that part of the world. In some places, barley is recommended as “medicine for the heart.” That’s because, say nutritionists, it is full of beta glucans – a type of fiber that can lower the risk of heart disease by reducing levels of artery-clogging LDL.

A diet that includes lots of barley, three times a day, has lowered blood cholesterol by about 15% in a number of medical studies.

That same high fiber content keeps us regular, relieves constipation and wards off a wide variety of digestive problems. It also may help block cancer.

As anyone who has done any Bible study at all knows, bread – always made from barley or other whole grain flours – was regarded as so vital to good health and a long life that it was called “the staff of life.”

Barley is effective at shutting down the liver’s production of the bad LDL cholesterol that does so much damage to our arteries – the kind that can cause strokes and heart attacks. In one interesting study on animals, researchers from the United States Department of Agriculture discovered that the production of LDL was reduced by a remarkable 18% when large amounts of barley were added to their diet.

In a follow-up study, scientists at Montana State University discovered that a high barley diet had the same effect on people. In that study, a group of men ate many foods containing barley, including cereal, bread, cakes and muffins made from barley flour. After six weeks of three servings a day, the men’s cholesterol levels

dropped an average of 15%. Those whose cholesterol levels were the highest at the start showed the most significant improvement.

Coriander (Cilantro)

When the Children of Israel wandered in the desert and received manna from the sky, they described it as looking like coriander seed.

Ever since, coriander has been called “the healer from heaven.”

Coriander is an annual plant of the carrot or parsley family and has pink or white flower clusters. The fruit consists of globular, grayish-white colored seeds. It grew wild throughout Egypt, ancient Palestine and other countries in the region. The seeds have a pleasant, aromatic oil. They are used as a spice or flavoring for pastries, meats, candies, salads, soups, curries and wine.

Chances are, none of the early peoples suffered from indigestion because coriander has been used for centuries as a treatment for minor stomach ailments. Unlike most medicines for digestive problems, coriander tastes great and has a warm fragrance like citrus and sage.

It's recommended for indigestion, flatulence and diarrhea. Externally, it's used to ease muscle and joint pain. Recently, scientists began looking at coriander as an anti-inflammatory treatment for arthritis. Other research has demonstrated that it reduces blood sugar levels, an indication that it may prove to be a useful sugar management tool for diabetics.

Fish – Luke 24:42-43

Fishing on the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan was a huge industry. During their exile in Egypt, the Israelites learned to prize fish from the Red Sea, and for the people of the Old Testament, there were precise dietary laws for seafood.

We know today that fish is low in cholesterol and contains healthy polyunsaturated fats.

Since there was no way of preserving fish (except by salting), most people in Bible times ate their fish fresh – a wonderfully rich source of protein, potassium, vitamins and minerals with only a moderate amount of sodium.

We also now know that eating fish:

- Thins the blood
- Protects arteries from damage
- Inhibits blood clots (anti-thrombotic)
- Reduces blood triglycerides
- Lowers LDL blood cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces risk of heart attack and stroke
- Eases symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis
- Reduces risk of lupus
- Relieves migraine headaches
- Fights inflammation
- Helps regulate the immune system
- Inhibits cancer in animals and possible humans
- Soothes bronchial asthma
- Combats early kidney disease

The key to the healing powers of fish lies in the omega-3 fatty acids. These are particularly concentrated in cold-water fish such as anchovies, bluefish, herring, lake trout, mackerel, sablefish, whitefish, bluefin tuna, salmon and sardines.

For more than 200 years, cod liver oil was prescribed for a number of ailments, including rheumatism and arthritis, because it was believed it could “lubricate the joints.” But it wasn’t until 1985 that doctors writing in the *New England Journal of Medicine* recommended that arthritis sufferers could benefit from eating fish once or twice a week.

In the case of arthritis, the omega-3 oils do “lubricate” the joints by reducing painful inflammation. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases says the oils “unquestionably are anti-inflammatory agents.”

Research funded through the institute demonstrated that these oils blocked the formation of something called leukotriene B4, which triggers inflammation. The institute reported “... a significant correlation between the drop in leukotriene B4 and decrease in the number of tender joints...” after the oils were prescribed.

There are three villains lurking deep in side our bodies that cause heart attacks and strokes. They are the plaque that can clog arteries and dangerously restrict blood flow; the accumulation of platelets (sticky pieces of blood cells) that clump together and form clots; and the sudden, unexplained spasms of blood vessels that can throw the heart out of kilter or halt the flow of blood to the brain, causing strokes.

Studies on fish oil show it works wonders in reducing or eliminating all three risks. People who eat lots of fish seem to have thinner blood, which is less prone to clotting. Omega-3 oils also reduce triglycerides and dangerous LDL cholesterol and that may be why fish is such a powerful ally in the battle against heart disease.

Eskimos eat about 13 ounces of omega-3 rich seafood a day and rarely suffer from heart attacks. The same is true of Japanese fishermen and their families who consume, on average, at least 7 ounces of fish daily.

Norwegian scientists recently discovered that a mere three ounces of mackerel in the daily diet thins the blood within six weeks, significantly reducing the risk of clogged arteries, heart attacks and strokes.

In Britain, a study involving hundreds of participants revealed that those on a heavy fish diet developed higher concentration of “good” HDL cholesterol than even vegetarians.

The best news is that it might not even take very much fish to fight off heart disease. Researchers at the University of Leiden in the Netherland monitored residents of one small town who ate only one ounce of fish a week.

The results were astonishing. The risk of heart disease in the study group was 50% less than among those who ate no fish at all.

Experts warn that hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the red light warning us that a life-threatening heart attack may be headed toward us like a runaway train. To stop it, they say, get that blood pressure under control!

The Center Institute for Cardiovascular Research in Berlin studied 24 men with slightly elevated blood pressure. For two weeks, half of the group dined daily on two seven-ounce cans of mackerel and followed that with three cans a week for the next eight months. Mackerel was chosen for its very high levels of omega 3 oils.

The results? The higher the levels of omega-3 fatty acids in their blood, the more their blood pressure dropped. The conclusion: A minimum of only three ounces of mackerel a week lowered blood pressure about 7% - and eliminated the need for medication.

Fish oils seem to be just as important in fighting cancer. Those overactive prostaglandins that may touch off heart problems, are also present in most cancers, says Rutgers University researcher Dr. Rashida Karmali. Now, encouraging

studies at Rutgers and elsewhere indicate that fish oils are highly effective at putting the clamps on the over-production. And once the heavy concentration of those hasty prostaglandins is reduced, the risk of breast, pancreatic, lung, prostate and colon cancer also drops. Eskimo and Japanese women eat lots of fish and seldom develop breast cancer.

Migraine sufferers may find relief with omega-3 fish oils, according to a team of researchers at the University of Cincinnati. Of those who took part in that study, 60% reported that their chronic migraines were less severe and the frequency reduced by half over six weeks when they took fish oil capsules. The average number of migraines dropped from two a week to two every two weeks. For some reason, men seemed to benefit more from adding the fish oils to their diet than women.

A change in diet in which omega-3 fish oils replaced animal fats also dramatically slowed down the rate of deterioration in people suffering early kidney disease.

Garlic

It's one of the world's oldest healing foods. It was being used both as a favorite food and as a powerful medicine centuries before Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

Garlic and its cousin the onion were regarded highly for both health-giving and magical qualities in ancient cultures. Garlic was one of the first foods to be deliberately cultivated, although wild varieties grew in abundance. Evidence of its healing powers is detailed in 4,000 year old records from the ancient kingdom of Sumeria. Depiction of garlic bulbs have been discovered on walls of Egyptian tombs that date back to 3200 B.C. – centuries before Joseph and his brothers settled in Egypt.

During that same period, ancient records reveal that garlic was the principal ingredient in many remedies that Egyptian healers prescribed as cures for headaches, sore throats and other complaints.

By the time of Moses, garlic was already being used as an anticoagulant, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and anti-tumor agent, as well as a relief for flatulence, a diuretic, a sedative, a poultice and as a cure for internal parasites.

At least 67 different varieties of garlic and onions have been identified as growing in the Holy Land, so it's little wonder that the ancient Israelites developed a fondness for it centuries ago. It may for health reasons that the Talmud specifies that several different foods are to be seasoned with garlic regularly.

Research suggests that garlic may help protect against heart disease and stroke by lowering blood pressure. It contains allylic sulfides, which may neutralize carcinogens. In fact, garlic has been linked to lower rates of stomach cancer too.

The *Environmental Nutrition Newsletter* published evidence from five clinical trials showing that ½ to one clove per day lowered blood cholesterol levels an average of 9% in people with borderline and high cholesterol.

Scientific interest in the healing power of garlic has exploded so much over the last decade that the National Library of Science now lists nearly 150 papers published on garlic's ability to maintain good health.

In various studies, garlic powder, aged garlic extracts and fresh garlic all have had positive effects in preventing cancer in animals; improving diabetes management; slowing the growth of human cytomegalovirus; preventing fatigue; and relieving stress more effectively than the addictive tranquilizer, Valium.

As little as half a raw clove will boost the body's natural protection against blood clots, which cause heart attacks and strokes. And it takes only two raw garlic cloves a day to lower cholesterol levels in heart patients.

The ingredient that gives garlic its strong smell is a chemical called allicin. That also makes it such a potent antibiotic. In hundreds of experiments, allicin extract from raw garlic has destroyed the germs that spread such illnesses as botulism, tuberculosis, diarrhea, staph, dysentery and typhoid.

One scientist reports: “Galic has the broadest spectrum of any antimicrobial substance we know of. It’s antibacterial, antifungal, antiparasitic, antiprotozoan and antiviral.” Some researchers say that one medium-size garlic clove has as much antibacterial power as 100,000 units of penicillin.

Japanese scientists have distilled an antibiotic medication called Kyolic from raw garlic. Because it was used so commonly as an antibiotic by Russian army medics during World War II, it became known throughout all of Europe as the “Russian penicillin.” An astonishing 500 tons of garlic were trucked into Moscow to combat one influenza epidemic in the 1950’s. European doctors still prescribe garlic to ward off colds, pneumonia, whooping cough and a wide array of intestinal disorders.

Another natural ingredient in garlic called alliin is changed into the antibiotic substance, allicin, when garlic is chewed, chopped or crushed. Animal tests in Japan indicated that fresh garlic might be an effective weapon against a form of breast cancer. And another finding from the same suggested that garlic is probably a better antioxidant than vitamin E, one of the top antioxidants known to slow the aging process.

At the M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute in Houston, investigators looked at sulfur compounds from both garlic and onions and concluded their ingredients blocked the formation of carcinogens that lead to colon cancer. Meanwhile, the National Cancer Institute has announced that the sulfur in garlic is high on its list of potential natural “chemo preventives.”

Garlic is also heart-friendly. Scores of studies around the world have focused on garlic’s astonishing ability to fight hypertension, prevent embolisms, or blood clots and lower bad cholesterol. A study at Bombay Hospital’s Research Center in India found that those who ate several garlic cloves daily significantly reduced the risk of potentially deadly blood clots – even in patients who already suffered from coronary disease.

In even smaller doses, garlic drastically reduced cholesterol levels – on average from a high of 305 all the way down to 218 over a 60-day period.

While cooking may destroy or reduce the allicin and weaken garlic’s potential, most of its therapeutic benefits remain intact. Cooked garlic still lowers blood cholesterol and works as a decongestant and cough medicine.

Before the birth of Christ, the Israelites were using garlic as a major ingredient in their food, as well as a medicine. In fact, they were so fond of garlic and consumed so much of it that in the Mishnah they proudly called themselves “garlic eaters.”

Whether cooked, raw or in extract form, garlic may be one of the most potent natural healing foods we have. The ancient people of the Bible knew that basic fact of life while some of our scientists are just rediscovering it.

Grapes – Numbers 12:23

Grapes were the first things Noah planted after the flood. Grapes were eaten fresh, dried and eaten as raisins just as we do today and pressed into cakes. But most of the crop of the vineyards was made into juice, wine and vinegar.

One reason this delicious fruit was so important in the diet thousands of years ago was because of its high content of boron, a mineral that we now know helps ward off osteoporosis. Boron is now sold as a dietary supplement in health food stores, but the people of the Bible had to get theirs from natural sources.

Aside from preventing osteoporosis, grapes offer many healthy benefits. A cup of raw grapes contain only 58 calories, 0.3 grams of fat; zero cholesterol and vitamins A, B and C. Grapes also contain important minerals such as boron, calcium, potassium and zinc.

They also fight tooth decay, stop viruses in their tracks and are rich in other ingredients that many researchers believe can head off cancer. That's because grapes are packed with things called polyphenols and tannins, both of which appear promising as antiviral and antitumor agents.

Recently, a team of Canadian scientist reported that grapes destroyed disease-causing viruses in test tubes. To test that potential, they examined grapes, grape juice, raisins and red, rose and white wines. They added certain viruses to a grape extract made from pulp and skins; other viruses to the grape juice and raisin mixture; and a third set of viruses to the wines.

All three substances seemed to effectively fight the viruses, but they were especially potent against the viruses that cause polio and herpes simplex. The reason is because grapes contain tannin, a virus fighter that is absorbed directly into the intestinal tract where it does the most good.

The grape tannins can survive digestion and quickly circulate through the blood, perhaps attacking deadly viruses. Grape juice also kills bacteria and dramatically restricts tooth decay.

Grapes also have extraordinarily high levels of something called caffeic acid, which has been shown to be a strong anti-cancer substance. And raisins, which are dried grapes, were definitely associated with the reduced rate of cancer deaths among one group of American senior citizens.

In biblical days, grapes provided all of these health benefits. People didn't know what the grapes did – they just knew that they were equally delicious eaten raw right off the vines, dried as raisins, boiled down into a sweet grape honey or fermented into wine.

Leeks

Leeks are also mentioned in the Book of Numbers, as a milder, sweeter version of the onion. In cooking, the leek is extremely versatile when used to flavor other dishes or as a food by itself. It has a more delicate flavor than garlic or onions and forms the basis of many traditional dishes that originated in ancient Israel and neighboring lands.

A favorite dish in biblical times – and still popular in present day Middle East – was a kind of porridge made from the white bulb of the leek, rice or similar grains, with crushed almonds and honey added as a sweetener.

Leeks were prescribed for infertile women and have traditionally been used internally and externally for a variety of conditions including obesity, kidney complaints, intestinal disorders and coughs.

Legumes – 2 Samuel 17:28, 29

As reported in the Book of Samuel, beans were among the highly nutritious foods sent to feed King David's hungry army and restore their strength for the hard times ahead. But why might beans have been so important?

We now know that beans are absolutely packed with soluble fiber, which helps lower LDL and reduces blood pressure. That same fiber also helps keep blood sugar levels stable, staves off hunger and has even been shown to reduce the insulin requirements of people suffering from diabetes.

Important as they are to us today, they were even more important as a staple food in biblical times. Beans are a wonderful source of protein as well as being packed full of vitamin C, iron and dietary fiber. In the West, most of us get these either from other foods or from supplements.

Beans were also easy for these early farmers to cultivate and could be made into purees and pottages or a type of coarse bread. Another advantage was that they were easily dried and stored for use during hard times.

Bible scholars say that the beans mentioned in the Bible were broad beans because these were extensively cultivated throughout the countries of the eastern Mediterranean during that period. They are known to have also been a popular food in Egypt.

Unlike our biblical ancestors, today there is a wide range of beans to choose from – red, white and black beans, black-eyed peas or cowpeas, chickpeas, fava, kidney, lentils, lima, split peas, pinto, white, Great Northern, navy and butter beans. All of them offer the same kind of wonderful health benefits.

Beans help lower blood pressure and reduce the “bad” cholesterol that today's research has shown to be the cause of so much devastating heart trouble – a rarity centuries ago.

Beans also contain chemicals that inhibit the growth of cancer and help control insulin and blood sugar levels so vital to the good health of diabetics. On a more routine level, beans help prevent constipation. They can stop hemorrhoids and other bowel-related problems from developing and help cure them if they do.

In those ancient times, beans and garlic were often boiled together, which produced a primitive version of cough medicine that was said to stop even the most stubborn cough.

But you don't have to eat beans morning, noon and night to receive the benefits. A cup of cooked beans a day may be all that's needed.

Even canned baked beans don't lose all their therapeutic strength as a result of their processing. One study found that a can of pork and beans could lower

cholesterol levels by an average of 12%. But beware, most canned goods also come packed in lots of salt.

Here's a quick list of the power of beans:

- They are naturally packed with potent levels of plant protein.
- That same cup contains 6-7 grams of valuable fiber.
- They are low in fat and cholesterol free.
- They are high in potassium, iron and thiamine and low in sodium.
- Just a single cup provides about 12 grams of complex carbohydrates or starches. That makes them an excellent source for quick energy.

Scientists tell us that during the digestive process, certain natural chemicals contained in beans and other legumes are released. They slow down the liver's production of that dangerous LDL cholesterol. Moreover, those same chemicals go rushing through our cardiovascular system, helping to clean out evil LDL which might otherwise clog our arteries.

At least one noted researcher, Dr. James Anderson at the University of Kentucky, is so convinced of the power of beans that he recommends a minimum of one cup of cooked beans daily to help prevent heart disease. He says that even among middle-aged men a diet that includes beans dramatically reduces cholesterol levels by as much as 19%.

A companion study at the University of Minnesota came up with nearly identical findings.

At least two participants with dangerously high cholesterol levels who switched to the bean diet, surprised everyone by decreasing their cholesterol levels from 274 to 190.

The same digestive process that releases the cholesterol-fighting chemicals in beans also produces the all-important protease inhibitors, which are basic components of beans. The protease inhibitors seem to be extremely effective in blocking the formation of certain cancers including colon and breast.

All the research is not yet in, but it's possible these protease inhibitors aren't as effective after the cancer has developed. However, some experts think they may decrease out-of-control cell division before it progresses to cancer.

Beans also rank high on the list of nature's other regulators. Not only are they a quick and effective cure for constipation, but by keeping wastes moving along at a regular, healthy pace, they apparently reduce the risks of colon or rectal cancer, intestinal disorder and hemorrhoids.

Beans are also important to diabetics because of their ability to regulate insulin output. Type I diabetes can cut back on their need for insulin by as much as 38% when put on a bean-rich diet. Most of Type II diabetics in the same study were able to stop insulin injections entirely!

Worried about gas? An easy solution is to slowly increase your bean consumption to give your body a chance to adapt. Or soak them overnight or flush with boiling water, then let sit for four hours, drain and cook in fresh water.

